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Dam removal project to get more state funding

LANSING – The Senate Appropriations Committee approved an amendment to the Department of Natural Resources budget to speed the removal of three dams on the Kalamazoo River.

The amendment, introduced by Sen. Tom George, R-Texas Twp., provides an additional \$1,750,000 from the Clean Michigan Initiative Clean Water Fund for the removal of the Otsego, Plainwell and Trowbridge dams on the Kalamazoo River.

"This site is one of the largest superfund sites in the nation," said George. "Addressing the disposition of these three dams is an important step in the cleanup of the river."

Negotiations between local, federal and state officials to remove these dams have been ongoing for more than 20 years. Cleanup costs have been estimated at more than \$1 billion. The federal government retains the authority over the clean-up though the state owns the dams and is responsible for their condition.

"This is an emergency situation that we are trying to fix," said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. "Should there be heavy rainfalls and these dams were to break, downstream areas would be at risk from PCB contaminated soil. It is crucial to address the issue before we have a catastrophe."

The amendment also provides for recovery of the dam removal costs from responsible parties by the department and allows for their restoration to the budget once acquired.

The DNR budget now goes to the full Senate for approval.